THE HOUSE OF MOHUN

By GEORGE GIBBS

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SYNOPSIS

CHERRY MOHUN, daughter of a meddling father and socially aspiring mother, is a typical girl of the period—a flapper in all but also an athletic girl, not altogether spoiled by wealth and adulation. Dr. David Sangree, a young American ethnologist, who is easily surprised at the changes in the country on his return from a long scientific expedition, meets her through George Lycett, an elderly philosopher. Cherry is bored by the savant, and he is startled at her and her set. Cherry tries to push Sangree, but he doesn't know it. Piqued with spirit of excitement, she challenges him to a wild horseback ride.

Peter bent over the victim, who had now struggled to a sitting posture and was looking about him in a bewildered way

"I OUGHT to be very grateful for your interest," she said in mock humility, "because it really seems quite sincere. But I'm afraid there's no hope of your doing anything to help me. I'm a lost soul, you know."

"Oh, I say——"

"Oh, yes, I am. Quite lost. I don't feel that I'm fit company for any respectable ethnologist. You see, dad 'wished me' on you. He thinks I'm all right. He doesn't imagine all the terrible things that I've confessed to you. But I do hope you can put up with me—at least until we see the stables."

David Sangree refused to smile. He had no mind to be made ridiculous by this astonishing young worldling. And yet he was quite sure that she had made him so, and he only blundered the more.

"I'm quite sure that you—er—have a right to form—er—any habits that you please. Our chance encounter—at night—has given me—er—no license either to comment or to criticize. I would remind you that I have not done so——"

"Oh, I'm so much obliged to you. But you don't really approve of me, Dr. Sangree. Please admit that."

"I'm afraid you want people to think you're much worse than you are," he said coolly.

"Really. Do you think that? That's rather nice of you, Dr. Sangree. But it isn't true. I'm an awful creature. I'm actually so depraved that I don't give a damn what people think of me."

Sangree grinned. "You at least have the convictions of your courage," he said.

They had reached the stable inclosure and she swaggered in ahead of him. In her mannish clothing she looked like an overgrown boy, but her impudent irony informed him that she was quite too clever at the game of verbal give-and-take for anything that he had to offer. He was stirred by the thought that, more than anything else, what Miss Cherry Mohun needed was a sound spanking.

If she was aware of this mental castigation, she gave no sign of being so.

She was quite certain that, in the game she was playing, the professorial antiquity that Dad had "wished on her" had come out second-best. But the end of her afternoon's enjoyment was not yet. In the back of her head a joyous plan was forming, a delicious plan which still further involved the disillusionment of Dr. David Sangree. It was Dad's fault. His was the responsibility whatever happened now.

The heads of horses protruded from the upper halves of the doors of several box stalls. Cherry Mohun exhibited with pride her own hunter, "Bramble," and her brother Bob's mare, "Centipede." They were very restless, snorting and twisting about in their narrow confines.

"It seems as though they needed exercise," commented Sangree.

"Oh, yes. I haven't ridden for a week. Poor old Bramble! You know, he won a blue in the challenge class at Piping Rock. Isn't he too adorable!"

"Yes, too adorable," said Sangree soberly, as though really aware of the fate that awaited him.

"You say you ride, Dr. Sangree?" she asked, turning to him, suddenly.

"A little," replied Sangree with a nod.

She laughed. "You know," she said "I'm simply perishing for a ride."

"Please don't let me interfere with your plans," he said, hastily.

"But you have already interfered with them," she went on coolly. "Mother wanted me to meet you and I stayed. I'm awfully obedient when I have to be. But you see I have met you now——"

"Don't bother about me. I'll find my way back."

"Oh, no. That wouldn't do. But I'm sure Mother wouldn't mind my going in the least if you'll only go with me."

"Me—!"

"Why not? Riding alone is beastly and I never take a groom. Please, Dr. Sangree, won't you ride with me?"

She had faced him and her blue eyes were as innocent of guile as those of a cat which has just swallowed the canary.

"Please Dr. Sangree," she insisted. "Bramble and Centipede have been eating their heads off for a week. It will be awfully jolly, and the country is simply gorgeous this afternoon."

"If you'll excuse me, I think—"

"You're going to refuse? Oh, Dr. Sangree!"

"I haven't ridden for a year. I ride very badly," he said stiffly.

"I'm sure you're too modest."

"No," he replied coolly. "But I have no desire to be thrown off."

She turned half away from him, biting her lip.

"I thought that you'd ridden in the East." She shrugged a shoulder. "I'm beginning to believe that you were never in the East, that you've never ridden a horse or even seen an airplane."

She turned toward him, smiling to take the sting from the inference. "I'm sure you ought to be flattered by my asking you."

"I am. But I have no wish to make myself ridiculous."

"You refuse then?" she said with another shrug, this time a trifle contemptuous. "Are you really frightened, Dr. Sangree?"

David Sangree straightened and stared at her for a moment through his goggles. Then his brows drew together.

"Frightened! Well—er—perhaps—a little. But I'll ride with you, if you insist, Miss Mohun."

"I don't insist," she said demurely. "But I couldn't believe after all I've heard that you were really afraid."

"I am afraid of mettlesome horses. But I'll ride with you."

Their glances flashed together for the briefest moment and Cherry laughed gayly at the sudden resolve that she had found in him, which was at once a tribute to her finesse and her power.

"Oh, thanks," she said with a gay laugh. "Of course I knew that you weren't really frightened."

Sangree didn't reply and merely stood awkwardly, his fingers twiddling at the seams of his trousers, while the stableman put the saddles on the horses. This seemed rather a difficult task, productive of unpleasant and sinister motions from the mare, Centipede, which was to be, as he now understood, the animal allotted to him. From time to time he saw the eye of the stableboy glance askance in his direction, but Miss Cherry Mohun, occupied with the too adorable Bramble, already seemed to have forgotten him.

"The mare is pretty fresh, Miss," he heard the groom say. "If the gentleman——"

"It's all right, Peter," she laughed. "But you needn't say anything to Mr. Robert. Just give me a hand up, will you?"

She was in the saddle with boyish ease, Bramble prancing and curveting gracefully around the stableyard, while Centipede, awake to the opportunities of the open spaces, struggled with the active stableboy, who held her head down and led her to the unwilling victim.

But David Sangree was "game." If Cherry had counted on ridicule to achieve her pleasure the ruse had been entirely successful. He mounted and got his feet into the stirrups, when the boy released the horse's head. Cherry, on Bramble, an amused twinkle in her eyes, was already headed for the gate, which Peter had run to open for her, when Centipede, one of whose ancestors some generations back had been bred on the western range, began weaving intricate posterior circles, ending in a series of playful buck-jumps in the general direction of the outer wall. The first of these buck-jumps lost Sangree his right stirrup, the second one his left, and the third sent him flying over Centipede's head, so that he fell rather heavily on one arm and shoulder, and lay for a moment motionless.

Peter the groom and the stableboy came running.

The boy caught the horse and Peter bent over the victim, who had now struggled to a sitting posture and was looking about him in a bewildered way. His face had gone very white, but he got to his feet watching the stable boy capture the refractory horse. This accomplished, he was aware of Cherry Mohun's voice somewhere in the air above him——

"You're not badly hurt, Dr. Sangree?" she asked.

"No—no. Not at all," he replied. "It—er—all happened rather—er—suddenly."

Glancing up, he caught a glimpse of the smile that hovered at the corners of her lips and heard what seemed like a sort of low gurgle in the tones which she gullitly tried to make sympathetic. She was laughing at him, openly, brazenly.

"I don't think he'd better be ridin' the mare, Miss——"

"Bring her here," Sangree's rasping voice cut in. His face was whiter than ever, and Peter glanced at Miss Mohun.

"Give me a hand up, please."

"Do you think you'd better?"

"Yes. Yes. I'll stick on now."

He got into the saddle somehow, but his right arm hung awkwardly.

"Just use the snaffle unless she gets to pulling, sir," said Peter dubiously.

"I don't intend that she shall get away from me," said David Sangree as they went out of the gate into the road, but whether he referred to Centipede or to Miss Mohun, no one will ever know, for at that moment Bramble shook his head and away they went with a sudden noisy clatter and a rattle of pebbles against the fence rails. After the first sprint Cherry Mohun looked over her shoulder. The "professorial antiquity" was still upright not far behind her and his face wore a rather ghastly smile.

Now somewhat reassured as to his horsemanship, she let Bramble have his head for a few hundred yards, rejoicing in the swift rush of keen air, the joy of motion and the predicament of her companion.

Perhaps some admiration for his pluck in mounting after his fall had caused her to keep Bramble in check for the first few minutes. But she couldn't forget that he had dared to believe the very worst of her and to let her see that he believed it. Google-eyes! She smiled exultantly over her shoulder. He was still in the saddle, close to Bramble's heels. His gaze was straight before him along the road and he was riding with a loose rein which speedily sent Centipede into the lead. Fool! He meant race. She let Bramble have his head and she led the way.

Both horses were breathing hard now, for the road had a slight upgrade. But at the top of the hill, where prudence compelled her to pull in, he passed her in full stride, down a slight declivity, swaying back in his saddle but, by some miracle, keeping his seat.

She followed, rather alarmed at his desperateness, for a fall here at this speed meant dangerous injury.

At the top of the next rise she caught him at the crossroads, both horses breathing heavily.

"Are you trying to kill yourself?" she shouted.

He merely shook his head, and took a new grip of the reins.

"Which way?" he gasped.

"Home—if you're bent on committing suicide."

"Lead on!" he muttered with a gesture of his head.

"But you let her get away from you——"

"Did I? Well—er—" he grew pallidly. "I'm still here."

"I don't want to see you kill yourself."

"Don't you? I thought you did."

"You needn't be an idiot. Let's go back."

"No." Without waiting for her reply he dug his heels into the heaving flanks of his horse and she followed. How he remained upright with such a seat was a mystery, for he swayed dangerously in his saddle and she noticed for the first time that his right arm hung motionless at his side.

Fool! He had been hurt, too.

To Be Continued Tomorrow

Uncommon Sense : *Holding On*

By JOHN BLAKE

IN MR. LONGFELLOW'S poem about "St. Augustine's Ladder" is found one word which ought to be italicized for the benefit of the great, the near-great and the not-great-at-all. So we shall italicise it.

"The heights by great men reached and *kept*
Were not attained by sudden flight,
But they, while their companions slept,
Were toiling upward, in the night."

IT MAY be that the poet used the word kept because he needed a rhyme for slept. But inasmuch as he maintained his reputation not only as a poet but as a learned and kindly man to the end of his days there is reason to believe that he employed it because of its significance.

For great men not only reach the heights, but they keep them, and the keeping is often harder than the reaching.

Any reader of this newspaper, if he ransacks his memory, can remember dozens of names of men who were prominent twenty, ten or even five years ago, and who are now forgotten.

These men, by achievements that looked important at the time, got into the limelight. But they didn't stay there.

They had in them the ability for one or perhaps two important achievements.

Then, either because they had expended all the ability they had or because conceit over their exploits ruined them, they stopped producing—and were forgotten.

KEEPING in this world is harder than getting, and getting, as any man who uses his mind will tell you, is sufficiently hard to tax the powers of the ordinary brain.

We cannot all be great. We cannot all be nearly great. But those who desire to command any sort of success must be more careful about keeping than they are about getting.

Industry and ability combined ought to bring the average being into a position swell above his fellows, for the average person is lazy, and these two qualities are usually productive of promotion.

But when one gets into an important position he finds that somebody else wants it and is willing to work to get it. And if the occupant of the position wants to hold on, he must work just a little harder than his competitors to do so.

THERE are more men who have been prominent in the last ten years than there are men who are prominent now.

And the reason is that the acquiring of prominence or prosperity or even a good steady paying job is easier than the retaining of it.